

N E I G H B O R H O O D
P R O F I L E



Neighborhood Profile

East Cambridge is traditionally known as a stable, ethnically diverse, and closely-knit neighborhood. More than one-third of its residents have lived in the neighborhood for at least 21 years. However, underlying many issues in East Cambridge is the concern that the population and social fabric of the neighborhood is changing quickly as long-time, moderate income residents are being replaced by newcomers with higher incomes.

This chapter provides an overview of the key demographic changes that have taken place in East Cambridge from 1960 to the present — in terms of population, income, education and employment. This study uses two main sources of information:

- (1) The United States Census Bureau data from 1960, 1970 and 1980.
- (2) The East Cambridge Demographic Survey conducted by Bell Associates in May 1988.

While precise comparisons are made between 1960 and 1980, general trends are noted to highlight changes from 1980 to 1988. The 1988 survey is distinct from the U.S. Census data because:

- Its methodology included a sample size of 362 residents, whereas the U.S. Census sends a questionnaire to every household.
- It asked fewer demographic questions than the U.S. Census questionnaire.
- It only sampled households with telephones and those who were home during the calling period, resulting in less precise results.

Population

- (1) From 1960 to 1980, East Cambridge lost 20% of its population (from 6,702 to 5,380)

while the city's population declined by 12% during this same period. Total population figures are not available for 1988.

(2) East Cambridge's population decline from 1960 to 1980 occurred mostly among the age group of 0-19 years (a 45% decrease) and among the age group of 35-54 years (a 36% decrease). For the city as a whole, population decline also occurred among these age groups, but at a lesser rate (a 35% decline for the age group 35-54 years).

The East Cambridge population among people aged 55 and older, however, increased by 38% between 1960 and 1980. For the city, the population of this age group declined by 23% during this twenty-year period.

Between 1980 and 1988, survey results indicate that there has been an increase in the age groups of 20-34 years (from 26% to 37%) and 35-54 years (from 17% to 23%); a continuing decrease in the age group of 0-19 years (from 24% to 19%); and a decrease in the age group over 65 years (from 18% to 13%). The age breakdown for 1988 is:

0-4 years	6%
5-19 years	12%
20-34 years	37%
35-54 years	23%
55-64 years	9%
65 years and over	13%
	100%

(3) Similar to the city, the number of families in East Cambridge has declined significantly. Families comprised 85% of all East Cambridge households in 1960, but only 55% of all households in 1980. For the city, the percentage of families declined from 71% in 1960 to 46% in 1980.

A family is defined as two or more related persons and a household is defined as one or more related or unrelated persons.

The 1988 demographic survey shows a continuing drop in the number of families, representing 48% of all East Cambridge households. The household composition in 1988 is:

single-person household	37%
couple with children	24%
couple without children	17%
live with roommates	12%
single-parent household	7%
other	3%
	<u>100%</u>

(4) Both household and family size have declined over the last twenty years. In East Cambridge, household size decreased from an average of 3.2 persons per household in 1960 to 2.4 persons per household in 1980; family size declined during this same period from 3.6 persons per family to 3.2.

The 1988 demographic survey shows that the greatest percentage of people live in one-person households:

1-person households	36%
2-person households	27%
3-person households	18%
4-person households	11%
5-person households	6%
6-person households	1%
7+-person households	1%
	<u>100%</u>

Ancestry and Race

(1) In 1980, the largest groups with single ancestry in East Cambridge were Portuguese (22%), Italian (20%), and Irish (11%). The other sizeable ethnic group was Polish, which comprised 5% of the East Cambridge population in 1980.

Complete information on ethnicity is not available for 1988.

(2) In 1980, nearly 25% of the city's Italians and Portuguese lived in East Cambridge. Comparable figures for 1988 are not available.

(3) East Cambridge's population in 1980 included 96% whites and 2% blacks and Asians. In 1988, the demographic survey found that the black and Asian population in East Cambridge has grown to 5% (2% black and 3% Asian).

(4) The percentage of foreign-born people in East Cambridge increased from 20% in 1960 to 26% in 1980. However, according to the 1988 demographic survey, the percentage of foreign-born people has dropped to approximately 15%.

Income

(1) In 1980, East Cambridge had the lowest median household income of any neighborhood in the city (\$10,187), but ranked sixth among the city's 13 neighborhoods in terms of median family income (\$15,929).

(2) From 1970 to 1980, the family poverty rate in East Cambridge remained the same at 12% — the sixth highest poverty rate of the 13 Cambridge neighborhoods.

(3) In 1980, income distribution in East Cambridge was as follows: nearly 27% of the households earned less than \$10,000; 34% earned between \$10,000-20,000; 29% earned between \$20,000-\$35,000; and 10% earned more than \$35,000.

A direct comparison of income in 1980 and 1988 is not possible. However, the 1988 demographic survey estimates the income breakdown as follows:

- 33% are low income (50% or less of the median income for the Greater Boston area or less than \$20,550 for a family of four).
- 26% are moderate income (50%-80% of Greater Boston median income or \$20,550-\$29,900 for a family of four).

- 41% are middle income and upper income (more than 80% of the Greater Boston median income or more than \$29,900 for a family of four).

Education

(1) In East Cambridge, total school enrollment increased slightly between 1960 and 1970, but declined by over 54% between 1970 and 1980, corresponding to the drop in the number of families. For the city, there was a 22% decline in school enrollment between 1970 and 1980.

(2) The 1988 survey found that 17% of East Cambridge households have children attending school. Of these, 88% are attending public schools and 12% are attending private schools.

(3) From 1960 to 1980 there was a significant increase in the percentage of East Cambridge residents 25 years and older who had completed at least four years of high school (from 22% in 1960 to 41% in 1980).

The 1988 survey found a continuing sharp increase in high school graduates to 77%.

(4) Although since 1960, there has been an increase in the percentage of residents completing at least one to four years of college, only 16% of the East Cambridge population 25 years and older had completed at least one year, but not more than four years of college in 1980. For the city, 55% of the population had completed 1-4 years of college in 1980.

The 1988 demographic survey shows a significant increase in the number of residents who have earned a college degree to 36%. The breakdown is as follows:

10% completed no more than eighth grade
13% completed some high school
23% completed high school
18% completed some college
18% completed post-college

Occupations

(1) The most common occupations in East Cambridge from 1960 to 1980 were operatives/laborers, clerical, and services. The following table shows East Cambridge occupations from 1960 to 1980:

Occupation	1960	1970	1980
Operatives/ Laborers	41%	29%	27%
Clerical/Sales	22%	25%	27%
Craftsmen	11%	15%	12%
Services	9%	13%	16%
Other	8%	0%	0%
	100%	100%	100%

(2) Between 1960 and 1980, there was a sharp drop in the percentage of East Cambridge residents employed as operatives or laborers, such as machine operators and assemblers (from 41% in 1960 to 27% in 1980.) However, in 1980 more East Cambridge residents were still employed in this occupation than any other.

(3) From 1960 to 1980, the percentage of residents employed in both professional and service occupations nearly doubled. Professional occupations increased from 9% in 1960 to 16% in 1980 and service occupations increased from 9% in 1960 to 18% in 1980.

The 1988 survey shows a sharp increase in professional occupations and a continued drop in operatives/laborers. The breakdown in occupations include:

Professional/Technical	39%
Clerical/Sales	30%
Services	12%
Operatives/Laborers	10%
Craftsmen	9%
	100%

(4) The unemployment rate in East Cambridge increased from 6.1% in 1970 to 8.3% in 1980, whereas the unemployment rate for the city was approximately 4.0% in 1960, 1970 and 1980.

According to the 1988 survey, this trend reversed as unemployment dropped to 3% in East Cambridge.

(5) The 1988 survey found that 44% of East Cambridge residents work in Cambridge, 29% work in Boston, and the remaining 27% work elsewhere.

Length of Residency

(1) Between 1970 and 1980, the percentage of residents who had lived in the neighborhood five or more years stayed about the same (60%). However, the 1988 demographic survey shows that 68% of residents have lived in the neighborhood five or more years, an increase from 1980.

In 1988, the length of residency breakdown is:

32%	Less than five years
19%	5-10 years
13%	11-20 years
36%	21 years or more.

(2) When comparing newer residents (those who have moved into the neighborhood in the last five years) to longer-term residents, the 1988 survey found that newer residents have higher incomes, more education, and are more likely to be employed in professional occupations.

Summary of Demographic Changes

This chapter has shown that similar to the city as a whole, East Cambridge is experiencing a declining population, particularly among families, and is characterized by smaller-sized households and fewer school-aged children.

East Cambridge continues to have a strong ethnic base comprised primarily of Portuguese, Italians and Irish. The black and Asian population has grown slightly in recent years, but combined, still only comprises 5% of the population. East Cambridge has historically had one of the most sizeable low-income populations (particularly among households) in the city. Today, nearly 60% of the households are low or moderate income, earning less than \$29,000 for a family of four.

A significant portion of the East Cambridge population is becoming more educated, with an increasing number receiving high school and college degrees. There is still a significant segment of the population (10%), however, who have less than an eighth-grade education.

Employment changes in the neighborhood are characterized by a shift from manufacturing to professional occupations. This employment shift has been accompanied by a significant drop in the unemployment rate since 1980 from approximately 8% to 3%.

The neighborhood has experienced a recent influx of newer residents who tend to have higher incomes, more education, and be employed in professional occupations than longer-term residents. However, longer term residents (21 years or more) represent the greatest portion of the total neighborhood population.

Resident Views of Neighborhood Quality and Community Participation

To gain a better understanding of community perceptions of neighborhood change, the 1988 survey conducted by Bell Associates, asked several questions about community spirit and neighborhood concerns. The results are presented in the first section of this chapter. In addition, the Community Development Department conducted a separate survey of members of the East Cambridge Stabilization Committee and Planning Team — neighborhood groups who advocate for the neighborhood's needs on a broad range of issues. The results of this survey are presented in the last section of this chapter.

Neighborhood Quality (Bell Associates Survey)

(1) Most residents think East Cambridge has stayed the same or improved as a place to live compared to five years ago. This positive feeling is more pronounced among long-term residents, homeowners and single-person households.

- When asked how their neighborhood rates as a place to live compared to five years ago, 39% said it has improved, 37% said it has stayed the same, and 20% said it has gotten worse, and 4% did not respond.

(2) Most East Cambridge residents think community spirit has stayed about the same, and think it will improve in the future.

- 45% said community spirit has stayed the same over the past five years, 27% said community spirit has improved, and 18% said it has deteriorated.
- 36% said community spirit will improve over the next five years, 28% said it will stay the same, and 19% said it will deteriorate.

(3) When asked to identify the best qualities in East Cambridge, most people responded: neighborly feeling (26%), convenience/location (14%), public transportation (11%), retail establishments (11%), and physical condition/appearance (10%).

(4) When asked about neighborhood problems, most residents cited lack of parking, high housing costs, traffic congestion, high rents and development pressures as major problems. Other problems considered to be minor were: rundown homes, lack of open space and environmental quality. Those issues which were considered not to be a problem were: elderly services, day care, transportation, youth services, rundown parks, and lack of recreation facilities.

However, respondents who have children viewed the problems of lack of day care, lack of open space and lack of youth services as more important than those who do not have children.

Community Involvement (Bell Associates Survey)

(1) The majority of residents (66%) said they do not know enough about development plans for their neighborhood. They prefer to have information about city plans sent to their home through a newsletter, newspaper articles, or mail or flyers. They prefer not to attend meetings regardless of whether they are held in the neighborhood or at City Hall.

(2) Almost one-half (42%) of East Cambridge residents have wanted to change something or address a problem in the neighborhood.

(3) Highly-educated residents and couples are more likely to want to make changes in the neighborhood.

71% of residents with at least some college education want to make changes, whereas 71% of residents with a high school education or less do not see a need to make changes.

The table below highlights community perceptions of neighborhood problems in East Cambridge:

	Major Problem	Minor Problem	No Problem
Lack of parking	70%	13%	14%
High housing costs	65%	10%	14%
Traffic congestion	51%	25%	22%
High rents	50%	18%	24%
Development pressures	47%	16%	20%
Environmental quality	30%	29%	31%
Lack of open space	25%	27%	43%
Rundown homes	23%	38%	35%
Rundown parks	18%	29%	46%
Lack of recreation facilities	15%	25%	47%
Lack of youth services	15%	15%	30%
Lack of day care	11%	8%	27%
Lack of elderly services	8%	14%	45%
Inadequate public transportation	5%	14%	78%

Source: East Cambridge Neighborhood Survey, Bell Associates, 1988

Two-thirds of single people living alone have never contacted anyone about a neighborhood problem.

(4) Of those who want to change something, 50% took some action, usually by contacting a government agency (56%) or contacting the Stabilization Committee or some other neighborhood group (29%).

(5) Nearly one-half (46%) of residents have heard of the Stabilization Committee. Of these,

46% believe they have done a good or excellent job of representing residents' needs to the City, 27% said they have done a fair or poor job, and 27% did not respond.

(6) Of those who have heard of the Stabilization Committee, 17% are active participants (have attended four or more meetings per year over the last two years) and 72% are not active (have attended less than four meetings per year over the last two years).

Neighborhood Organization Survey

The Community Development Department undertook a separate survey of members of the East Cambridge Stabilization Committee and Planning Team to compare their opinions to the survey results of the larger neighborhood. The results are:

(1) Similar to the opinions of the larger neighborhood, neighborhood group participants perceive that the most important neighborhood problems are traffic congestion, lack of parking, high housing costs, and development pressures.

(2) In strong contrast to the larger neighborhood, these participants are less optimistic about the quality of life issues:

- 71% said the neighborhood is a worse place to live compared to five years ago.
- 65% said community spirit has deteriorated over the past five years.
- 44% said the quality of life will not improve at all in the next five years.

(3) When asked what effect East Cambridge residents have had on city policy, 12% said a great deal, 59% said somewhat, and 30% said no effect at all.